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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. HOLDEN).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC, April 17, 2007.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM HOLDEN to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NANCY PELOSI,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 2007, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) for 5 minutes.

ALTERNATIVE MINIMUM TAX REFORM

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, 4 million Americans are paying the price for the misplaced tax priorities of the Bush administration and the Republicans here in Congress. For the last 6 years, their obsession with assisting the top 1/10 of a percent and other favored special interests to reduce their tax burden has riddled the Tax Code with more loopholes, adding about a million and a half more words to that code. At the same time they

have considered three mammoth and expensive tax bills in 2001, 2003 and 2004 that refused to address the alternative minimum tax inequity. They have made few modest additions with broad benefit like the 10-percent bracket but showered their real attention, their affection, and huge sums of money on those who need help the least. In the process, the \$5.6 trillion surplus inherited by this administration has evaporated, to be replaced by \$2 trillion more in additional national debt.

In the meantime, the alternative minimum tax, signed into law by Republican President Richard Nixon to ensure that the richest of Americans, who used tax shelters, pay at least some income tax, has morphed into a tax on millions of Americans who are caught because they pay their State and local taxes and are raising their families but largely leaves the most wealthy untouched.

Without extraordinary action, over the course of the next 3 years the alternative minimum tax will ensnare 32 million families, virtually every two-worker middle-class family with children. It won't bother the hedge fund manager or the NBA superstar but it will tax the teacher married to the firefighter with two kids. Because a tax shelter now means paying your local property and income taxes but does not include the tremendous tax advantage from capital gains, it won't hit the high-tech billionaire but will hit the postal worker and the nurse with three teenage kids at home.

The zeal to make permanent these tax changes has left the needs of tens of millions of Americans at risk. Indeed, the number one priority of the administration and the Republicans in Congress for taxation would not only make a true reform of the alternative minimum tax prohibitively expensive, it would rely on the ever-widening reach of the alternative minimum tax to finance their schemes.

On this day that millions of Americans are filing their tax returns and 4 million are paying the mutated, unfair alternative minimum tax, it is time to have that critical national debate on taxes in honest terms:

Should we tax people who work at jobs more than people whose money works for them?

Do we care about reducing the ability of some very privileged people to escape taxation?

What is our priority for tax reform? Is it to freeze the patchwork of special interest provisions over the last 6 years? Or to prevent 32 million families from an unjust alternative minimum tax, and then paying billions more to accountants just to calculate the damage?

I would hope that this is the last year that this unjust tax is used to provide unnecessary tax benefits for those who need them the least at the expense of those truly in need of tax relief.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 10 o'clock and 35 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at noon.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, the Reverend Daniel P. Coughlin, offered the following prayer:

All powerful God, yet so loving and merciful, be present and attentive to those most in need. A Nation tossed by violent storms and upset by tragic

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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human events surrounds grieving families and young people in schools with its prayers today.

As faith-filled Abraham reveals Your own filial love as he gazed on his son Isaac, so we identify with any parent who groans in mourning over the lifeless body of a child. Bring Your love to bear upon the campus of Virginia Tech and all the families affected by the crackling sound of gunfire and then the unbearable silence that follows. Thrown by the rush of terror and anxiety, may the people of God now reach out to them in their overwhelming moment of helplessness.

You, Lord, through the prophet Isaiah have said You would care for the young: "The Lord, our everlasting God, creator of the whole world, grows neither weary nor faint. Yet no one can fathom God with full understanding. He gives vigor to the weary, new strength to the exhausted. Even if the young and vigorous grow weary and faint, and stumble and fall, those who look to the Lord will receive new life. They will be lifted up on the wings of eagles. They will run and never tire. They will march and never grow weary."

We believe in You and with You, Lord God, they will live in Your presence until we are all reunited, forever and ever.

Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announces to the House her approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1, rule I, the Journal stands approved.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER. Will the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. ROSS) come forward and lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. ROSS led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. WALZ of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 1677, the Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007.

Every year thousands of taxpayers receive smaller refunds than they are entitled to. Our Tax Code is so inaccessible and complicated that many families do not claim all of the credits they so sorely need. The Taxpayer Protection Act of 2007 will improve communication between taxpayers and the IRS. By encouraging the Internal Revenue Service to reach out to those that

may qualify for the earned income tax credit, we will save struggling families many thousands of dollars.

Tax preparation is a multibillion-dollar business in America. It is useful to those who can afford it, but no one should be forced to hire an accountant or a preparer just to ensure that they can enjoy the benefits that many of us take for granted. Nor should the industry be able to prey on taxpayers with unfair refund anticipation loans.

This piece of legislation will improve the safeguards against fraud. By increasing reporting requirements on the IRS, the agency will become a vital component in the important fight against identity theft.

As many Americans rush to file their taxes on time this week, we all want to feel secure that the refund we receive is no more or less than we deserve.

TODAY IS TAX DAY

(Mr. KELLER of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KELLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, today is tax day. Millions of Americans will write big fat checks to Uncle Sam. Who is paying the bill? The top 10 percent of households, families with incomes of \$100,000 or more, pay 70 percent of all Federal income taxes. Coincidentally, 70 percent of all the new jobs in America are created by small businessmen.

The tax cuts of 2003 have created 7.8 million new jobs and have given us the lowest unemployment rate in four decades. Unfortunately, the Democrat budget proposal contemplates allowing these tax cuts to expire which will give Americans the largest tax increase in history.

Under the Democrat tax increase, small businesses will be hurt and 42 million families with children will see their tax bill go up by an average of \$2,100. A married couple with two kids making \$60,000 will see their taxes go up by 60 percent.

On tax day let's remember the hardworking families who are paying the bills to Uncle Sam and oppose all new taxes.

STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. YARMUTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. YARMUTH. Mr. Speaker, we are all still numb from yesterday's heart-breaking tragedy in Blacksburg, Virginia. I want to take a moment to extend my thoughts and prayers and those of my constituents in Louisville, Kentucky, to the students and faculty, friends and family at Virginia Tech University. We stand with you today in outrage and mourning, seeking answers and sharing your loss.

I rise today in strong support of the Taxpayer Protection Act. Our tax system is tailor made for accountants and

those who can afford to hire them. For those who must tread tax season alone, a dearth of regulation opens these citizens up to Internet scams and identity theft. A lack of easily accessible information ensures that money-saving provisions like the earned income tax credit go unnoticed and unutilized, costing Americans hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

The Taxpayer Protection Act changes that, turning a bureaucracy designed for accountants into a system made for Americans. This bill will ensure that Americans who benefit from the earned income tax credit are those who deserve it, not only those who are shrewd enough to find it.

Over the last 6 years we have seen a tax system that has worked very well for the extremely rich. I urge my colleagues to pass the Taxpayer Protection Act.

CONGRESS NEEDS TO MAKE TAX RELIEF PERMANENT

(Mr. WALBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALBERG. Mr. Speaker, over the past few weeks Americans across our country have taken time out of their busy schedules to complete their 1040s, 1099s and W-2s by the April 17 deadline.

They did so in many different ways. Some planned ahead and mailed in their forms well before the deadline, while others are scrambling to finish work on their taxes until late tonight.

Today, taxpayers in south central Michigan are still working to meet their tax obligation for 2007. While tax day may be today, the average Michigander will have to work until April 29 of this year just to pay his or her individual tax bill.

The \$400 billion tax increase recently passed by Congress represents the largest tax increase in American history and could lead to a crippling economic recession.

Americans know best how to spend their hard-earned money, and rather than increase the tax burden, Congress needs to make tax relief permanent for hardworking American families.

By putting our fiscal house in order, this Congress can go a long way in restoring the trust of the American people and build a better, brighter future for our country.

EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE TAXPAYER PROTECTION ACT

(Mr. ELLSWORTH asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ELLSWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for two reasons. First of all, I want to extend my deepest condolences to the victims of yesterday's tragedy at Virginia Tech. The people of the Eighth District of Indiana will keep them and their families in their thoughts and prayers